



To: Senate Economic Development Committee and International Investment Committee

From: Allie Bush, Director of Government Affairs

Subject: Support for HB 4226

Date: June 11, 2015

On behalf of the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce and our 2,500 members, we support House Bill 4226.

In West Michigan, we have a strong collaborative spirit where public, private and nonprofit cooperation are hallmarks of our community. We know that we are stronger when we work together. West Michigan is home to over 1.5 million residents, representing 15.5 percent of the state's population. Manufacturing and health care are two of our top industries for employment and growth – both of which have benefited from the Grand Rapids SmartZone.

For over a decade, the Grand Rapids SmartZone has helped support and spur entrepreneurship and growth in West Michigan's high-tech business sector. Grand Rapids and West Michigan have benefited from the district's work thanks to the collaborative efforts of the Van Andel Research Institute, Grand Valley State University, Spectrum Health, GR Current, and others.

Since its inception in 2001, there has been \$60 million of increased assessed value within the Grand Rapids SmartZone. Michigan Street is an area within the district that was previously underdeveloped and is now vibrant with activity, commerce and research. Now this area, also known as Medical Mile, continues to attract the best and brightest from across the globe to our region for healthcare, research and technology.

Since 2008, Michigan Street has seen \$1 million investment from the SmartZone, which has garnered \$120 million in private investment that has spurred 2,350 new jobs in healthcare and life sciences.

A prime example of success in our SmartZone is NxGen MDx, which started in 2012 under Grand Valley State University's Cook DeVos Center for Health Sciences incubator. NxGen MDx provides genetic carrier screening, utilizing state-of-the-art technology to provide the most accurate genetic screening available for over 120 genetic diseases. Since its inception, NxGen MDx has grown out of the incubator space and into a 5,000 square foot facility. In the last two years, they created 22 full time jobs, and provide multiple internships for area university laboratory technicians. In 2015, NxGen MDx was selected as a Michigan 50 Companies to Watch awardee, and was honored at the Michigan Celebrates Small Business's event.

We have witnessed the benefits of this program in Grand Rapids, and this legislation would provide the opportunity to extend the successes in Grand Rapids and include our partners in Ottawa County. Our two business communities have a long and deep history of collaboration and this legislation will help to support our shared goal of making West Michigan a top of mind region.

I urge you to support development, attraction and growth of technology-based businesses in Michigan and vote YES on House Bill 4226.